The China-Tibet Issue

For Prelims: China-Tibet Issue, **Dalai Lama,**

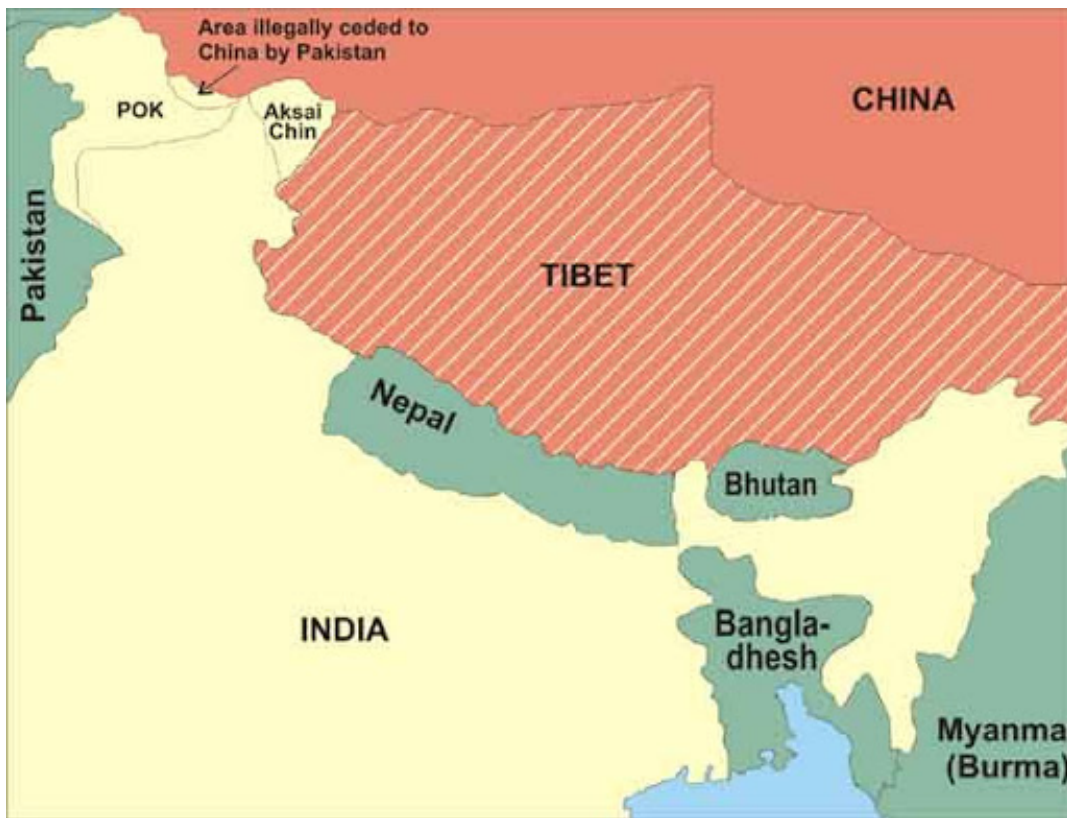**For Mains:** Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests.

Why in News?

During a recent discussion with reporters in Dharamshala, the **Dalai Lama** reaffirmed his stance that **Tibetans seek greater autonomy within China,** emphasizing their desire for **self-governance** while remaining part of the People's Republic of China.

What is the China-Tibet Issue?

- **Tibet's Independence:**
  - Tibet is a region on the Tibetan Plateau in Asia, spanning about 2.4 million km2 – nearly a quarter of China's territory.
  - It is the traditional homeland of the Tibetan people as well as some other ethnic groups.
  - **Tibet is the highest region on Earth**, with an average elevation of 4,900 meters. The **highest elevation in Tibet is** Mount Everest**,** Earth's highest mountain, rising 8,848 m above sea level.
  - The **13th Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso**, announced de facto Tibetan independence in early 1913.
    - **China did not recognize Tibet's independence and continued to claim sovereignty over the region.**

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- **Chinese Invasion and Seventeen Point Agreement:**
  - From 1912 until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, no Chinese government exercised control over what is today **China's Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).**
  - The Dalai Lama's government alone ruled the land until 1951. **Tibet was not "Chinese" until Mao Zedong's People's Liberation Army (PLA)** marched in and Invaded Tibet.
  - In 1951 Tibetan leaders were forced to sign a treaty dictated by China. The treaty, known as the **"Seventeen Point Agreement"**, professes to guarantee Tibetan autonomy and to respect the Buddhist religion but also allows the establishment of Chinese civil and military headquarters at Lhasa (Tibet's capital).
    - However, the Tibetan people , including the Dalai Lama consider it invalid.
    - This has often been described by the **Tibetan people and third party commentators as "a cultural genocide".**
- **1959 Tibetan Uprising:**
  - Escalating tensions between Tibet and China led to a critical turning point in 1959 when the Dalai Lama, along with a group of followers, fled to India, seeking asylum.
  - Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama formed an exiled government based in Dharamshala, India, known as the **Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).**
- **Aftermath of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising:**
  - Since the 1959 Uprising, the central government of China has been steadily tightening its grip on Tibet.
  - In Tibet today, there is **no freedom of speech, religion, or press and arbitrary detainments continue.**
  - Forced abortion, sterilization of Tibetan women, and the transfer of low-income Chinese citizens threaten the survival of Tibetan culture.
  - Although China has invested in infrastructure improvements for the region, particularly in **Lhasa itself,** it has also encouraged thousands of ethnic Han Chinese to move to Tibet resulting in demographic shift.

What is the Impact of Tibet and the Dalai Lama on India-China Relations?

- For centuries, Tibet was India's actual neighbour, as most of India's boundaries and the **3500km**

LAC (Line of Actual Control) is with the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and not the rest of China.
- In 1914, it was Tibetan representatives, along with the Chinese that **signed the Simla convention with British India that delineated boundaries.**
- However, after **China's full accession of Tibet in 1950**, that China repudiated the convention and the **McMahon line that divided the two countries.**
- Further, in 1954, India signed an agreement with China, agreeing to recognize Tibet as **"Tibet region of China".**
- The presence of the **Dalai Lama in India** has been a persistent irritant in **India-China relations, as China considers him a separatist.**
- **The Tibetan plateau's significance in terms of water resources and geopolitical considerations adds complexity to the** India-China-Tibet equation.

What are the Recent Developments in Tibet?

- China has been building and developing next generation **infrastructure in Tibet**, such as border defense villages, dams, an all-weather oil pipeline, and internet connectivity projects.
- China is trying to **control the selection of the next Dalai Lama**, by promoting that Tibetan Buddhism has always been part of Chinese culture.
- The Indian government **doesn't give citizenship to Tibetans born in India after the cut-off year of 1987.**
    - This has created a sense of dissatisfaction amongst the youth of the Tibetan community.

Dalai Lama

- **About:**
    - The Dalai Lama belongs to the **Gelugpa tradition of** Tibetan Buddhism, which is the **largest and most influential tradition in Tibet.**
    - There have been only **14 Dalai Lamas** in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, and the **first and second Dalai Lamas were given the title posthumously.**
        - **The 14th and current Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso.**
    - The Dalai Lamas are believed to be manifestations of **Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.**
        - Bodhisattvas are realized beings inspired by a wish to attain **Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings,** who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help humanity.
- **Process to Choose Dalai Lama:**
    - The process to choose the Dalai Lama traditionally involves identifying the reincarnation **of the previous Dalai Lama**, who is considered the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism.
    - The search for the Dalai Lama's reincarnation typically begins after the **previous Dalai Lama's passing.**
        - According to Buddhist scholars it is the responsibility of the High Lamas of the Gelugpa tradition and the Tibetan government to seek out and find the next Dalai Lama following the death of the incumbent.
    - **If more than one candidate is identified,** the true successor is found by officials and **monks drawing lots in a public ceremony.**
    - The **selected child, usually very young,** is then recognized as the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and undergoes a rigorous spiritual and educational training.
    - The Dalai Lama's role encompasses both **spiritual and political leadership** in Tibetan Buddhism, and the selection process plays a crucial role in Tibetan cultural and religious traditions.
    - This process can take several years: it took four years to find the 14th (current) Dalai Lama.
        - The search is generally limited to Tibet, although the current Dalai Lama has said that there is a chance that he will not be reborn, and that if he is, it will not be in a country under Chinese rule.

Uterus Transplantation

For Prelims: Uterus Transplantation, Artificial Uteri, **In vitro fertilization**

For Mains: Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications, Bio-technology.

Source: TH

Why in News?

Recently, the United Kingdom's **first uterus transplant** was conducted, providing new hope for women facing reproductive challenges.

- India is one of a few countries to have had a successful uterine transplant; others include Turkey, Sweden, and the U.S.
- Doctors now **aim to reduce the surgery cost,** currently at Rs 15-17 lakh in India, and develop a bioengineered **artificial uterus** to simplify transplants and eliminate live donors for **ethical organ transplantation.**

What is a Uterus Transplant?

- **About:**
  - Unlike heart or liver transplants, uterus transplants aren't life-saving transplants. Instead, they are more like limb or skin transplants – which **improve the quality of individuals' lives.**

- Uterus transplants **can help women who lack a uterus fulfill their reproductive needs.**
- The first live birth after a uterus transplant occurred in Sweden in 2014, marking a breakthrough in treating uterine factor infertility.
- **Steps Involved in a Uterus Transplant:**
  - The recipient undergoes thorough physical and mental health evaluations before the transplant.
  - The donor's uterus, whether from a live or deceased donor, is rigorously examined for viability.
    - Live donors undergo various tests, including **gynaecological examinations** and cancer screenings.
  - The procedure **doesn't connect the uterus to the fallopian tubes,** which ensures the ovum from the ovaries moves to the uterus – so the individual can't become pregnant through natural means.
    - Instead, doctors remove the recipient's ova, create **embryos using** in vitro fertilization**, and freeze them embryos (cryopreservation).**
      - Once the newly transplanted uterus is 'ready', the doctors implant the embryos in the uterus.
  - Robot-assisted laparoscopy is used to precisely remove the donor's uterus, making the process less invasive.
  - After the transplantation procedure, the vital **uterine vasculature**(the network of **vessels connecting the heart to other organs and tissues** in the body) and other important linkages are methodically re-established.
- **Post-Transplant Pregnancy:**
  - Success is determined in three stages:
    - Monitoring **graft viability in the first three months.**
    - **Assessing uterus function** between six months to one year.
    - **Attempting pregnancy** with in vitro fertilization, but with higher risks like rejection or complications.
    - The final stage of success is a **successful childbirth.**
  - Frequent check-ups are essential due to potential risks like rejection, abortion, low birth weight, and premature birth.
- **Considerations and Side Effects:**
  - **Immunosuppressant drugs** are necessary to prevent rejection but may cause side effects.
  - Side effects include kidney and bone marrow toxicity and an increased risk of diabetes and cancer.
  - For these concerns, the **uterus must be removed after successful childbirth** and regular follow-ups for at least a decade are recommended after childbirth.

Artificial Uteri

- Researchers, at the University of Gothenburg, are working on **bioengineered uteri.** These are created using stem cells taken from a **woman's blood or bone marrow as a foundation for a 3D scaffold.**
  - Preliminary experiments with rats show promise.
- Artificial uteri could eliminate the need for live donors, addressing **ethical concerns** and reducing the **potential risks to healthy donors.**
- Artificial uteri could benefit women facing **infertility issues** as well as members of the **LGBTQ+ community**.
  - However, trans-women recipients may still need additional procedures, like castration(removing the testicles of a male animal or human) and hormone ftherapy.
  - Also, Ensuring consistent **blood flow to support a developing fetus** is a challenge in creating artificial uteri, as the **male body lacks the necessary structures for uterine and fetal development.**
- **Future Possibilities:**
  - Artificial uteri offer exciting possibilities for reproductive medicine but require further research and development before becoming a practical solution for human reproduction.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's Wagh Nakh

For Prelims: Wagh Nakh, **Chhatrapati Shivaji**, Chauth , Sardeshmukhi, Saranjam

For Mains: Maratha Empire and Administration.

Source: IE

Why in News?

Maharashtra's Cultural Affairs Ministry has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to bring back **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's** legendary **"Wagh Nakh"** a formidable medieval weapon to the state.

- The MoU states that the antique weapon will be handed over to the Government of Maharashtra **on a loan basis for a period of three years**, during which it will be displayed in museums across the state.

What is the 'Wagh Nakh'?

- The 'wagh nakh,' literally translating to '**tiger claws**,' is a unique medieval dagger used across the **Indian subcontinent.**
    - This fearsome weapon featured **four or five curved blades** affixed to a glove or a bar, designed for **personal defence or stealth attacks.**
    - Its sharp blades were capable of slicing through skin and flesh with ease.
- **Chhatrapati Shivaji's Defense with the 'Wagh Nakh':**
    - Chhatrapati Shivaji faced Afzal Khan, a Bijapur general assigned to stop Shivaji's strong campaigns in the Konkan. Khan suggested a peaceful meeting, but Shivaji, anticipating danger, came prepared.
        - He concealed a 'wagh nakh' and wore chainmail (armour made from small metal rings) under his attire. When Khan attacked, Shivaji's 'wagh nakh' struck, resulting in Khan's death, ultimately securing Shivaji's victory.

What are the Key Points Related to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj?

- **Birth:**
  - Born on 19th February 1630, at Shivneri Fort in Pune District, Maharashtra, he was the son of **Shahaji Bhonsle**, a Maratha general with jagirs in Pune and Supe under the Bijapur Sultanate, and **Jijabai,** a deeply religious woman who greatly influenced him.
- **Important Battles:**

Battle of Pratapgad, 1659	▪ Fought at the fort of Pratapgad near the town of Satara, Maharashtra, between the forces of the Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the Adilshahi general Afzal Khan.
Battle of Pavan Khind, 1660	▪ Fought at a mountain pass in the vicinity of fort Vishalgad, near the city of Kolhapur, Maharashtra, between the Maratha Sardar Baji Prabhu Deshpande and Siddi Masud of Adilshahi.
Sacking of Surat, 1664	▪ Fought near the city of Surat, Gujarat, between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Inayat Khan, a Mughal captain.
Battle of Purandar, 1665	▪ Fought between the Mughal Empire and the Maratha Empire.
Battle of Sinhagad, 1670	▪ Fought on the fort of Sinhagad near the city of Pune, Maharashtra between Tanaji Malusare, a commander of Maratha ruler Shivaji Maharaj and Udaybhan Rathod, fortkeeper under Jai Singh I who was a Mughal Army Chief.
Battle of Kalyan, 1682-83	▪ Bahadur Khan of the Mughal Empire defeated the Maratha army and took over Kalyan.
Battle of Sangamner, 1679	▪ Fought between the Mughal Empire and Maratha Empire. This was the last battle in which the Maratha King Shivaji fought.

- **Titles:**
  - He took on the titles of **Chhatrapati, Shakakarta, Kshatriya Kulavantas and**

Haindava Dharmodhhaarak.

- **Administration under Shivaji:**
  - **Central Administration:**
    - He established a centralised administration with a **council of eight ministers (Ashtapradhan)** who were directly responsible to him and advised him on various matters of the state.
    - The **Peshwa,** also known as the **Mukhya Pradhan**, originally headed the advisory council of Raja Shivaji.
  - **Provincial administration:**
    - Shivaji divided his kingdom into **four provinces.** Each province was further divided into districts and villages. The village was the basic unit of administration and was governed by a Deshpande or Patel with the help of a village panchayat.
    - Like the centre, there was a committee or council of eight ministers with **Sar-i-'Karkun'** or the '**prantpati'** (Head of the province).
  - **Revenue Administration:**
    - Shivaji abolished the **Jagirdari System** and replaced it with the **Ryotwari System**, and made changes in the position of hereditary revenue officials which were popularly known as **Deshmukhs, Deshpande, Patils , and Kulkarnis.**
    - Shivaji strictly supervised the Mirasdars who had hereditary rights in land.
    - The revenue system was patterned on the **Kathi system of Malik Amber** in which every piece of land was measured by **Rod or Kathi.**
    - **Chauth and Sardeshmukhi** were other sources of income.
      - Chauth amounted to 1/4th of the standard that was paid to Marathas as a safeguard against Shivaji's forces raiding non-Maratha territories.
      - Sardeshmukhi was an additional levy of 10% demanded from areas outside of the kingdom.
  - **Military Administration:**
    - Shivaji established an efficient army, **paying ordinary soldiers in cash** and high-ranking officials through jagir grants**(Saranjam).**
      - His military included **infantry (Mavali foot soldiers), cavalry (horse riders and equipment handlers),** and a navy.
    - Key roles included the **Sar-i-Naubat (Senapati) in charge of the army, Qiladars overseeing forts, Nayaks leading infantry units, Havaldars heading groups of five Nayaks, and Jumladars overseeing five Nayaks.**
- **Death:**
  - Shivaji passed away in **Raigad in 1680** and was cremated at the **Raigad Fort.** Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti is celebrated each year on **19th February** to remember and praise his courage, warfare tactics and administrative skills.

Israel-Palestine Conflict

Source: IE

Why in News?

Recently, the **Hamas**, the militant group ruling the **Gaza Strip**, have mounted a scathing attack on Israel from the land, air and water leading to multiple casualties. This has revived the century-old dispute between **Israel-Palestine Conflict** once again, necessitating the intervention by global and regional powers.

- Israel, in the recent times, has cemented many **peace agreements with neighboring countries such as UAE, Saudi Arabia** etc which is set to feel a jolt due to the recent attack.

What is the Israel-Palestine Conflict?

- **Balfour Declaration:**
    - The seeds of the conflict were laid in **1917** when the then British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour expressed official support of Britain for a Jewish "national home" in Palestine under the **Balfour Declaration.**
- **Creation Of Palestine:**
    - Unable to contain Arab and Jewish violence, **Britain withdrew its forces from Palestine** in 1948, leaving responsibility for resolving the competing claims to the newly created **United Nations.**
        - The UN presented a partition plan to create independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine which was not accepted by most of Arab nations.
- **Arab Israel War (1948):**
    - In **1948**, the Jewish declaration of Israel's independence prompted surrounding Arab states to attack. At the end of the **war,** Israel controlled about 50 % more territory than originally envisioned by the **UN partition plan.**
- **UN Partition Plan:**
    - As per the Plan, **Jordan controlled the West Bank and Jerusalem's holy sites, and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip**. But it fell short of solving the palestinian crisis which led to the formation **of Palestinian Liberation Organisation in 1964.**
- **Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO):**
    - PLO was founded, with the aim of freeing Palestine from clutches of Israel and Jewish domination and setting up the dominance of Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world.
        - The **United Nations granted the PLO observer status** in **1975** and recognizes Palestinians' right to self-determination.
- **Six-Day War: In 1967 war,** Israeli forces seized the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank & East Jerusalem from Jordan and Sinai Peninsula & Gaza strip from Egypt.
- **Camp David Accords (1978):**
    - "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" brokered by the U.S. set the stage for peace talks between Israel and its neighbors and a resolution to the "Palestinian problem". This however remained unfulfilled.
- **Emergence of Hamas:**
    - **1987:** Founding of Hamas, a violent offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood seeking to fulfill its agenda through violent jihad.
        - **Hamas-** It is regarded as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian Authority's legislative elections. It ejected Fatah from Gaza in 2007, splitting the Palestinian movement geographically, as well
    - **1987:** Tensions in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza reached boiling point resulting in the First **Intifada** (Palestinian Uprising). It grew into a small war between Palestinian militants and the Israeli army.
- **Oslo Accords:**
    - **1993:** Under the **Oslo Accords** Israel and the PLO agree to officially recognize each other and renounce the use of violence. The Oslo Accords also established the **Palestinian Authority,** which received limited autonomy in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.
    - **2005:** Israel begins a unilateral withdrawal of Jews from settlements in Gaza. However, Israel kept tight control over all border crossings (blockade).
    - **2012-** UN upgrades Palestinian representation to that of **"non-member observer state".**
- **Territorial Disputes of Israel with Neighboring Countries:**
    - **West Bank:** The West Bank is sandwiched between **Israel and Jordan.** One of its major cities is Ramallah, the de facto administrative capital of Palestine. Israel took control of it in the 1967 war and has over the years established settlements there.

- **Gaza**: The Gaza Strip located between Israel and Egypt. **Israel occupied the strip after 1967,** but relinquished control of Gaza City and day-to-day administration in most of the territory during the Oslo peace process. **In 2005, Israel unilaterally removed Jewish settlements from the territory**, though it continues to control international access to it.
- **Golan Heights:** The Golan Heights is a strategic plateau that Israel captured from **Syria in the** 1967 war**.** Israel effectively annexed the territory in 1981. Recently, the USA has **officially recognized** Jerusalem and Golan Heights as a part of Israel.

Israel's boundaries today
■ Palestinian civil control   ■ Built-up Palestinian area

How has the relationship of India with Israel evolved over the years ?

- **India's Stand on the Israel-Palestine Conflict:**
  - India was one of the few countries to oppose the UN's partition plan in 1947, echoing its own experience during independence a few months earlier.
  - **India** recognised Israel in 1950 but it is also the first non-Arab country to recognise **Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinian. India is also one of the first countries to recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.
  - In recent times, India is being seen shifted towards a **Dehyphenation of Policy.**
  - **Dehyphenation of Policy:**
    - India's policy on the longest running conflict in the world **has gone from being unequivocally pro-Palestine for the first four decades, to a tense balancing act** with its three-decade-old friendly ties with Israel.
    - In recent years, **India's position has also been perceived as pro-Israel.**
  - Further, India believes in a **Two-State Solution** with respect to **Israel-Palestine conflict**, and proposes the right to self-determination to both the countries in a peaceful manner.

What is the Impact of Assault on Israel-Saudi Arabia Ties ?

- One of the reasons for Hamas' assault on Israel can be attributed to **disrupting efforts to bring Saudi Arabia and Israel together,** along with other countries that may be interested in normalizing relations with Israel.
- Hamas had highlighted threats to **Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque**, the continuation of an Israeli blockade on Gaza and **Israeli normalization with countries in the region.**
- Dehyphening Saudi Arabia from Israel will help promote the agenda of Muslim Brotherhood and territorial sovereignty over the Arab and Middle East region.
- Normalization of ties of regional powers with Israel will further embolden and strengthen the position of Israel vis-a-vis reclaiming Palestinian territories.
- Ties with UAE,Egypt,Saudi Arabia etc will provide a vigorous push to infrastructural development, and create inter-dependence and inter-relationships among these countries, much to the chagrin of Palestinians.

Way Forward

- The **world at large needs to come together for a peaceful solution** but the reluctance of the Israeli government and other involved parties have aggravated the issue more. Thus a **balanced approach would help to maintain favorable relations with Arab countries as well as Israel.**
- The recent **normalization agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco**, known as the **Abraham Accords**, are the steps in the right direction. All **regional powers should envisage peace** between the two countries on line of Abraham Accords.
- India's role in multilateral organizations requires "strenuous efforts in cooperation with all related parties to achieve security and stability in the Middle East and West Asia".
- India is currently serving as a non-permanent member of the **United Nations Security Council for 2021-22** and was re-elected to the Human Rights Council **for the 2022-24.** India should use these multilateral forums to **act as a mediator** to resolve the Israel-Palestine issue.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q 1. Which one of the following countries of South-West Asia does not open out to the Mediterranean Sea? (2015)

(a) Syria
(b) Jordan
(c) Lebanon
(d) Israel

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q1. 'Too little cash, too much politics, leaves UNESCO fighting for life.' Discuss the statement in the light of US' withdrawal and its accusation of the cultural body as being 'anti-Israel bias'. **(2019)**

Q2 . "India's relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back." Discuss. **(2018)**

Ethics & Transparency Reforms in Lok Sabha

Source: IE

Why in News?

Two crucial reforms are pending within the Lok Sabha, aiming at fostering **Ethical Conduct** and transparency among its members. These are the formulation of a **Code of Conduct for members of Lok Sabha (LS)** and a **Declaration of Members' Business Interests.**

What is the Code of Conduct?

- **Background:**
  - A code for **Union ministers was adopted,** and state governments were advised to adopt it as well.
    - Now the Code of Conduct is applicable to **both Union and State ministers.**
  - In the case of MPs, the first step was the **constitution of Parliamentary Standing Committees on Ethics** in both the Houses.
    - The Committee in Rajya Sabha was inaugurated in **1997 to oversee the moral and ethical conduct** of the Members and to examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of Members.
    - The first Ethics Committee in Lok Sabha **was constituted in the year 2000** and since then, the issue of a **Code of Conduct** has been periodically discussed and recommended.
- **Delay and Current Status:**
  - The Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha has been deliberating on the Code of Conduct for over eight years, reflecting a **prolonged delay in addressing** this vital issue.
  - The matter was first brought up in **December 2014 when the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee** submitted a report with proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
    - The Code of Conduct has **long been applicable to members** of Rajya Sabha.
- **The Need for a Code of Conduct:**
  - The Code's purpose is to guide and ensure appropriate behavior and conduct among Lok Sabha MPs, enhancing the integrity of parliamentary proceedings.
  - The historical context dating back almost a century underscores the long-standing concerns about conflicts of interest and the need for regulatory frameworks.
  - The significance of a **Code of Conduct is highlighted** in promoting good governance, maintaining transparency, and ensuring MPs' adherence to ethical standards.

What is the Difference between Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct?

- **Code of Ethics is an aspirational document**, issued by the board of directors containing core ethical values, principles, and ideals of the organization.
  - Code of Conduct is a **directional document** containing specific practices and behavior that are followed or restricted under the organization.
- Code of Conduct originated **from the code of ethics,** and it converts the rules into specific guidelines that must be followed by the members of the organization.
  - Therefore, the latter **concept is wider than the former.**
- **Code of Ethics regulates the judgment of the organization** while a code of conduct

regulates the actions.

- **Code of Ethics focuses on values or principles.** On the other hand, the Code of Conduct is focused on compliance and rules.
- Code of Ethics is publicly available, i.e. anyone can access it. Conversely, the Code of Conduct is addressed to employees only.

What is the Declaration of Members' Business Interests?

- **About:**
    - It is a practice already **in place for Rajya Sabha members.**
    - The purpose is to identify and disclose any personal, pecuniary, or direct interests that could potentially create conflicts of interest, fostering transparency and accountability.
- **Long Running Saga:**
    - Concerns about **conflicts of interest for Members of Parliament (MPs)** were raised as far back as 1925.
    - In 2012, the **Lok Sabha Ethics Committee suggested** adopting the Rajya Sabha's practice of maintaining a 'Register of Members' Interests.'
        - This register provides information about MPs' financial and personal interests.
    - **Rule 293 in the Rajya Sabha outlines** the requirement for this register, which can be accessed by MPs and even ordinary citizens through the **RTI (Right To Information) Act.**
    - The Lok Sabha Secretariat provided an extract, Paragraph 52A, from a publication of Parliament titled 'Directions by the Speaker Lok Sabha'.
        - This paragraph applies to members of **Parliamentary Committees, not to all MPs.**
        - **The extract ("Personal, pecuniary or direct interest of member") says: "**
            - (1) Where a member of a Committee has a personal, pecuniary or direct interest in any matter **which is to be considered by the Committee,** such member shall state one's own interest therein to the Speaker through the Chairperson of the Committee.
            - (2) After considering the matter, the Speaker shall give a decision which shall be final."

What are the Recommendations by Second ARC?

- In addition to the existing Code of Conduct for Ministers, there should be a **Code of Ethics to provide guidance on how Ministers should uphold** the highest standards of constitutional and ethical conduct in the performance of their duties.
- Dedicated units **should be set up in the offices of the Prime Minister (PM)** and the Chief Ministers (CM) to monitor the observance of the Code of Ethics and the Code of Conduct. The unit should also be empowered to receive public complaints regarding violation of the Code of Conduct.
- The PM or the CM should **be duty bound to ensure the observance of the Code of Ethics** and the Code of Conduct by Ministers.
- An annual report with regard to the **observance of these Codes should be submitted** to the appropriate legislature. This report should include specific cases of violations, if any, and the action taken thereon.
- The Code of Ethics should **inter alia include broad principles of the Minister-civil servant relationship** and the Code of Conduct.
- The Code of Ethics, the Code of Conduct and the annual report should be put in the public domain.

Conclusion

- The adoption and implementation of **these reforms** are **crucial** in fostering **Ethical Conduct and Transparency** within the Lok Sabha.
- These initiatives will contribute to a **more accountable and responsible parliamentary system,** ultimately benefiting the democratic process and the nation as a whole.

India's Aviation Industry

For Prelims: India's Aviation Industry, Aviation turbine fuel, **RCS-UDAN**, National Civil Aviation Policy 2016, Sustainable Aviation Fuels.

For Mains: Status of the Aviation Industry in India, Measures to Re-energize the Aviation Sector in India.

Source: TH

Why in News?

India's aviation industry has witnessed remarkable growth in recent years. However, this rapid expansion has also highlighted critical issues including **severe shortage of experienced pilots.**

What is the Status of the Aviation Industry in India?

- **About:** India's aviation industry is a collective sector encompassing all aspects of civil aviation within the country.
  - It includes various components, such as **airlines, airports, aircraft manufacturing, aviation services, and regulatory authorities.**
- **Status:**
  - India has become the **third-largest domestic aviation market** in the world. India's airport capacity is expected to handle 1 billion trips annually by 2023.
  - According to the data released by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT),** FDI inflow in India's air transport sector (including air freight) reached **USD 3.73 billion** between **April 2000-December 2022.**
- **Associated Challenges:**
  - **Infrastructure Constraints:**
    - **Airport Congestion:** Many major airports in India, including those in **Mumbai and Delhi,** face severe congestion, leading to **delays and operational inefficiencies**.
    - **Limited Regional Connectivity:** While major cities are well-connected, smaller towns and regions often lack adequate airport infrastructure and air connectivity.
  - **High Operating Costs:**
    - High taxes on **aviation turbine fuel (ATF)** and airport charges contribute to increased operating costs.
      - Some Indian states charge up to **30% taxes on jet fuel,** which makes shorter flight routes unprofitable for smaller airlines.
  - **Pilot Shortages:**
    - Airlines in India often struggle to recruit and retain experienced pilots, leading to disruptions and increased labor costs.
      - The surge in aircraft orders, **totaling over 1,100 new planes**, translates into a need for thousands of flight crew members.

- However, the **average cost of pilot training in India is nearly ₹1 crore.**
  - Airlines often charge additional fees to cadet pilots under various pretexts, significantly increasing the financial burden.
    - **Security Threats**: Beyond **terrorism and hijacking**, security concerns are increasingly associated with cyber threats **to aviation infrastructure,** which can disrupt operations and compromise passenger data.
    - **Other Challenges:** Critics argue that the management of medical standards by Indian Air Force doctors has led to the **grounding of a significant number of civilian pilots.**
      - Also, there are numerous challenges associated with operating a flying training center, **exacerbated by corruption** among officials who enforce **regulations dating back to pre-Independence times**
  - **Related Government Initiatives:**
    - **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** rate reduced to 5% from 18% for domestic **Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO)** services.
    - **RCS-UDAN** was launched to **promote air connectivity to unserved and underserved airports in Tier-II and Tier-III cities** to stimulate regional growth and provide affordable air travel to the citizens.
    - **National Civil Aviation Policy 2016**

What Steps can be Taken to Re-energize the Aviation Sector in India?

- **Eco-Friendly Initiatives**: There is a need to Incentivize the development and use of **electric or hybrid aircraft for short-haul flights,** reducing emissions and operational costs.
  - Also, there is a need to promote the use of **sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs)** and carbon offset programs to minimize the industry's environmental impact.
    - In June 2021, SpiceJet announced its ambitious target to fly 100 million domestic passengers on **SAF blend by 2030** under the aegis of the **World Economic Forum (WEF).**
- **Digital Twins for Maintenance:**
  - There is a need to **implement digital twin technology** to create virtual replicas of aircraft, enabling predictive maintenance and reducing downtime.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):**
  - There is a need to foster collaboration between the **government and private sector to co-invest in airport infrastructure development**, ensuring world-class facilities.
    - The number of PPP airports in India is likely to increase from five in 2014 to 24 in 2024.
- **Reducing the Pilot Gap:**
  - There is a need to **establish subsidized pilot training programs** in collaboration with aviation schools and academies.
    - This can make pilot training more affordable for aspiring aviators.
- **Aviation Tourism Packages:** To make India a hub of Aviation tourism, our aviation industry can **collaborate with the tourism industry to create innovative aviation-based tourism packages,** offering scenic flights, adventure experiences, and aerial photography tours.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. Examine the development of Airports in India through joint ventures under Public–Private Partnership (PPP) model. What are the challenges faced by the authorities in this regard? **(2017)**

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban

Source: PIB

Why in News?

As a prelude to **Swachh Bharat Diwas,** the annual Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) fortnight was also organized by Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban and Gramin between 15th Sept to 2nd Oct 2023.

- The fortnight aims to mobilize the participation of crores of citizens across the country via various activities such as Indian Swachhata League 2.0, SafaiMitra Suraksha Shivir and mass cleanliness drives.

What is Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban?

- **About:**
  - **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)** was launched on 2nd October, 2014, by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** as a national campaign to promote cleanliness, sanitation, and proper waste management in urban areas.
  - It aimed to make cities and towns across India clean and free from open defecation.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 1.0:**
  - The first phase of SBM-U focused on achieving the target of making urban India ODF by providing access to toilets and promoting behavioral change.
  - SBM-U 1.0 was successful in achieving the target and 100% of urban India was declared ODF.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 (2021-2026):**
  - SBM-U 2.0, announced in Budget 2021-22, is the continuation of SBM-U first phase.
  - The second phase of SBM-U aimed to go beyond ODF to ODF+, and ODF++, and focus on making urban India garbage-free.
  - It emphasized sustainable sanitation practices, waste management, and the promotion of a circular economy.

What are the Achievements of Swachh Bharat Mission?

- 12 crore toilets have been built in the last nine years, liberating the country from the **scourge of open defecation and 75% of the total villages** have achieved the **Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus status.**
- Urban India has become **Open Defecation Free (ODF)**, with all 4,715 **Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** completely ODF.
- 3,547 ULBs are ODF+ with functional and hygienic community and public toilets, and 1,191 ULBs are ODF++ with complete faecal sludge management.
- 14 cities are certified Water+, which entails treatment of wastewater and its optimum reuse.

What are the Shortcomings of SBM?

- **Decline in Regular Toilet Use:**
  - Despite the initial success in increasing toilet access, the paper highlights a decline in regular toilet usage in rural India from 2018-19 onwards, raising concerns about the sustainability of the program.

- **Disproportionate Impact on Marginalized Groups:**
  - The largest drop in toilet usage was observed among Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) socio-economic groups, indicating that the program's benefits have not been equally sustained across all segments of society.
- **Concerns about Sustainability:**
  - The decline in toilet usage in recent years raises questions about the sustainability of the program's achievements, casting doubt on the long-term impact and behavioral change intended by SBM.
- **Spatial Variation in Toilet Use:**
  - At the national level, regular use of any toilet (improved or unimproved) increased from 46% to 75% on average in rural areas during 2015-16 and 2019-21.
    - This increase was across all population and socio-economic sub-groups, and especially pronounced for the poor and socially disadvantaged groups
  - But even as the regular use of any toilet for SC and ST people saw a jump of 51 and 58% points respectively between 2015-16 and 2018-19 - reaching almost the same levels as those in the General Category, gains were reversing since then.
- **Challenges in Richer States:**
  - Despite progress, wealthier states showed **mixed performance and smaller gains in toilet use compared** to economically poorer states, highlighting the need for tailored strategies in different socio-economic contexts.
  - States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Gujarat showed smaller progress in regular toilet use compared to economically disadvantaged states, **indicating that the program did not have the same impact across all states.**

What is Open Defecation Free Status?

- **ODF:** An area can be notified or declared as ODF if at any point of the day, not even a single person is found defecating in the open.
- **ODF+:** This status is given if at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained.
- **ODF++:** This status is given if the area is already ODF+ and the faecal sludge/septage and sewage are safely managed and treated, with no discharging or dumping of untreated faecal sludge and sewage into the open drains, water bodies or areas.

Way Forward

- Intensify efforts to promote behavioral change through targeted and community-specific campaigns, emphasizing the importance of regular toilet usage, hygiene, and safe sanitation practices.
- Engage communities to take ownership of sanitation facilities and practices, fostering a sense of responsibility and pride in maintaining clean and functional toilets.
- Ensure equitable distribution of benefits by targeting vulnerable and marginalized groups, providing them with access to sanitation facilities and emphasizing sustained usage through awareness and education.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. As per the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 in India, which one of the following statements is correct? (2019)

(a) Waste generator has to segregate waste into five categories.
(b) The Rules are applicable to notified urban local bodies, notified towns and all industrial townships only
(c) The Rules provide for exact and elaborate criteria for the identification of sites for landfills and waste processing facilities.

(d) It is mandatory on the part of the waste generator that the waste generated in one district cannot be moved to another district.

Ans: (c)

Mains:

Q. What are the impediments in disposing the huge quantities of discarded solid waste which are continuously being generated? How do we remove safely the toxic wastes that have been accumulating in our habitable environment? **(2021)**

2023 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences

For Prelims: 2023 **Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences**, **Gender Gap** in the **Labor Market**, Industrialization, Gender Pay Gap, Contraceptive Pills.

For Mains: 2023 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, Development and Employment.

Source: TH

Why in News?

Recently, the **Nobel Prize in Economics** for 2023 has been awarded to **Claudia Goldin**, a Harvard University professor, for research that has **advanced the understanding of the** Gender Gap in the **Labor Market.**

- Goldin is **only the third woman** to win this honor. In **2009, Elinor Ostrom** got the award along with **Oliver E Williamson,** while in **2019, Esther Duflo** shared it with Abhijit Banerjee and Michael Kremer.

What is the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences?

- The Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences was **established in 1968 by the Sveriges Riksbank (the central bank of Sweden)** in memory of Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite and the founder of the Nobel Prizes.
  - It is officially called the **Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences** in Memory of Alfred Nobel.
- Unlike the original Nobel Prizes in fields like **physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and peace**, which were established by Nobel's will, the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences is **not one of the original Nobel Prizes.**
- The prize was established later to honor outstanding **contributions to the field of economics.**
- The Prize recognizes individuals or organizations for their **exceptional research, discoveries, or contributions** that have advanced the understanding of **economics and its application to real-world problems.**

Why has Claudia been Chosen for the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences?

- **Claudia Goldin:**
  - Goldin has been a **pioneer in studying the role of women in the economy** and has written several books on the topic, such as **Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women (Oxford, 1990),** and **Career & Family: Women's Century-Long Journey toward Equity** (Princeton University Press, 2021).
- **Claudia's Work:**
  - Goldin had provided **"the first comprehensive account of women's earnings and labour market participation** through the centuries.
  - Her research reveals the causes of change, as well as the main sources of the remaining gender gap.
  - Goldin's path breaking work has shed light on the **participation of women in the labour market over the past 200 years,** and why the pay gap between men and women refuses to close even as many women are **likely to be better educated than men in high-income countries.**
  - While her research focused on the US, her findings are applicable to many other countries.
- **Findings of Claudia's Research Related to Women's Participation in Workforce:**
  - **Historical Perspective:** Before **Industrialization**, women were **more likely to be**

involved in economic activities related to agriculture and cottage industries.
- However, with the rise of industrialization and factory-based work, women faced **difficulties leaving their homes to work.**
- **Role of the Services Sector:** In the early 20th century, the growth of the services sector played a **pivotal role in women's access to higher education** and employment opportunities.
  - This sector **offered more opportunities for women** to enter the workforce.
- **Marriage Barriers:** By the beginning of the 20th century, while around 20 % of women were gainfully employed, the share of married women was only 5 %.
  - Goldin noted that legislation known as "marriage bars" often prevented married women from **continuing their employment** as teachers or office workers.
  - Despite an increasing demand for labour, married women were excluded from parts of the labour market.
- **Role of Expectations and Career Choices:** Women's expectations about their future **careers played a significant role in the** Gender Pay Gap.
  - Women's career decisions **were influenced by the experiences** of their mothers, leading to choices that did not necessarily prioritize long, uninterrupted, and fruitful careers.
- **Role of Contraceptive Pills:** The availability of easy-to-use contraceptive pills by the end of the 1960s allowed **women to exercise greater control over childbirth** and plan their careers and motherhood.
  - This led to more women studying subjects like law, economics, and medicine and entering various fields of employment.
- **Role of Parenthood in Pay Gap:** Despite improvements in education and employment opportunities for women, a significant gender-based pay gap persisted.
  - Initial earnings differences between men and women were small. However, once the first child arrived, women's earnings fell, and they did not increase at the same rate as men's earnings, even if they had similar education and professions.
  - **Parenthood played a role in the widening pay gap.**

Shri Ramalinga Swamy

Why in News?

India celebrated the **200ᵗʰ birth anniversary of Shri Ramalinga Swamy**, also known as **Vallalar**, on 5th October, 2023.

What are the Key Contributions of Shri Ramalinga Swamy?

- **About:**
    - Shri Ramalinga Swamy was a prominent Tamil poet in the **19th century** and a member of the **"gnana siddhars" lineage.**
        - He was born in the village of **Marudhur in Tamil Nadu.**
- **Vision of Social Reforms:**
    - Vallalar's vision transcends **religious, caste, and creed barriers,** recognizing divinity in every atom of the universe.
        - Vallalar was strongly against the **caste system** and initiated the **'Samarasa Vedha Sanmarga Sangam' in 1865**, later renamed **'Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Sathya Sangam.'**
    - He established **'The Sathya Dharma Salai,'** a free food facility in Vadalur, Tamil Nadu in 1867, serving all people without caste distinctions.
    - In January, 1872, Vallalar opened the **'Sathya Gnana Sabha' (Hall of True Knowledge)** in Vadalur.
- **Philosophical Beliefs and Teachings:**
    - One of Vallalar's primary teachings was **"Service to Living Beings is the path of Liberation/Moksha."**
    - According to Suddha Sanmarga, the prime aspects of human life should be **love, connected with charity and divine practice,** leading to pure knowledge.
    - Vallalar believed that the intelligence possessed by humans is **illusory (Maya)** intelligence and not accurate or final.
        - He emphasized **"Jeeva Karunyam" (Compassion for living beings)** as the path of final intelligence.
    - He forbade killing animals for the sake of food and advocated **feeding the poor as the highest form of worship.**
    - He also believed that God in the form of Grace is the **personification of Mercy and Knowledge.**
        - And**, Mercy is a path to God.**

Ganges River Dolphin

Source: TH

Why in News?

A recent scientific publication titled "**Rescuing Ganges river dolphins from irrigation canals in Uttar Pradesh, 2013-2020**" has elucidated the comprehensive endeavors focused on the **rescue and relocation of Gangetic river dolphins** from precarious situations within the **irrigation canals of the Ganga-Ghagra basin.**

What are the Major Highlights of the Report?

- **Dams and barrages** have severely affected the habitat of the dolphins, forcing them to move into irrigation canals where they are at risk of injury or death.
    - Over **70% of entrapments** were reported **either post-monsoon or during peak winter**, while the other **30% of dolphins were rescued during peak summer** when water levels fall and the minimum water flow is maintained.
- **19 Gangetic river** dolphins were rescued from irrigation canals in the **Ganga-Ghagra basin** in Uttar Pradesh between 2013 and 2020.

What are the Major Points Related to Ganga River Dolphin?

- **About:**
    - The Ganga River Dolphin (***Platanista gangetica***), also known as the **"Tiger of the Ganges"** was officially discovered in **1801.**

GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN
(Platanista gangetica gangetica)

National aquatic animal of India

Facts
- Can only live in freshwater; prefer deep water
- Essentially blind; hunts by emitting ultrasonic sound
- Can't breathe in water; must surface every 30-120 seconds for air
- Also called 'susu' because of sound they make while breathing

Habitat & Distribution
- Distributed in Ganges and Brahmaputra River basins of India, Nepal and Bangladesh.
- Distribution range in India covers 7 states namely, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Protection Status
- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I
- Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule I

Threats
- Habitat destruction
- Pollution
- Bycatch
- Climate Change
- Hunting

Conservation Efforts
- Project Dolphin (2021): On lines of project Tiger
- National Dolphin Research Centre (2021): India's and Asia's First; in Patna University (Bihar)
- Dedicated Dolphin Sanctuary:
    - Vikramshila sanctuary (Bihar) – 1991
    - Hastinapur sanctuary (UP) – Proposed

Drishti IAS

- **Habitat:** Ganges river dolphins historically distributed in major river systems **(Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu)** of India, Nepal and Bangladesh.
    - According to the recent study in the Ganga River Basin, the species recorded from the main stream of Ganga River followed by the tributaries, **Ghagra, Kosi, Gandak, Chambal, Rupnarayan, and Yamuna.**
- **Features:**
    - The Ganges river dolphin can **only live in freshwater** and is essentially blind. They hunt by emitting **ultrasonic sounds,** which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to **"see" an image in their mind.**

- They are frequently found alone or in small groups, and generally a mother and calf travel together.
    - **Females are larger than males** and give birth once every two to three years to only one calf.
- Being a mammal, the **Ganges river dolphin cannot breathe in water** and must surface every 30-120 seconds.
    - Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the **animal is popularly referred to as 'Susu'.**
- **Importance:**
    - They have significant importance because it is a **reliable indicator of the health of the entire river ecosystem.**
        - The government of India declared it the **National Aquatic Animal in 2009.**
        - It is also the **State Aquatic Animal of Assam.**
- **Major Threats:**
    - Unintentional killing through **entanglement in fishing gear.**
    - Poaching for **dolphin oil**, used as fish attractant and for medicinal purposes.
    - Habitat destruction due to **development projects** (e.g. water extraction and the construction of barrages, high dams and embankments), **pollution** (industrial waste and pesticides, municipal sewage discharge and noise from vessel traffic).
- **Protection Status:**
    - **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**: Endangered
    - **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972** : Schedule I
    - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)** : Appendix I
    - **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS):** Appendix 1
- **Related Government Initiatives:**
    - **Project Dolphin**
    - **Vikramshila Ganges Dolphin Sanctuary has been established in Bihar.**
    - **National Ganga River Dolphin Day** (5th October)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Q. Which one of the following is the national aquatic animal of India? (2015)

(a) Saltwater crocodile
(b) Olive ridley turtle
(c) Gangetic dolphin
(d) Gharial

Ans: (c)

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

Third Intifada

The recent escalation in the **Hamas-Israel conflict** has raised **concerns about a Third Intifada.**

- Hamas is a **militant Palestinian nationalist group** that has controlled **Gaza** since 2006.
- Intifada means **'shake off' in Arabic** and was used to describe the Palestinian **uprising against Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza.**
- The **First Intifada** lasted from 1987 to 1993, and the **Second Intifada** from 2000-2005.
    - The uprisings were spearheaded by Palestinian youth who were fed up with the treatment they faced from Israeli settlers.
    - Tensions between **Israel and Palestine** have not subsided since the end of the Second Intifada.

Read more: Israel-Palestine

Universe's Earliest Galaxies

A recent study published in **Astrophysical Journal Letters** offered insights into the early universe's star formation and brightness.

- The **James Webb Space Telescope,** operational since 2022, has provided a remarkable glimpse into the universe's early history, revealing a collection of galaxies from cosmic dawn.
- Researchers' findings indicated that star formation **in these galaxies** occurred in **bursts rather than steadily,** distinguishing them from modern, larger galaxies like the **Milky Way.**
    - In these early galaxies, star formation bursts caused significant variations in brightness, making them **appear larger and more massive** than they may have actually been. **Astronomers usually gauge a galaxy's size based on its brightness, but this phenomenon challenges that assumption.**
    - The study suggests that the bursts of star formation led to intense **flashes of light,** making these early galaxies appear brighter.
- In smaller galaxies, bursty star formation may occur **due to the formation and rapid explosion of very large stars,** which eject gas into space, fueling subsequent bursts of star formation.
    - Larger galaxies, with stronger gravitational effects, tend to have more stable, continuous star formation.

Read more: James Webb Space Telescope

Operation Kachchhap

In a recent operation named **"Kachchhap,"** the **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)** has successfully **rescued nearly a thousand live baby Gangetic turtles**, shedding light on the ongoing battle against illegal wildlife trade and the protection of these unique creatures.

- The **Ganga river system** in India is home to 13 species of turtles, they face various threats from habitat loss, overexploitation, and pollution.
- The operation resulted in the recovery of live baby turtles of different species, such as the **Indian Tent Turtle**, Indian Flapshell Turtle**,** Black Spotted/Pond Turtle, and Brown Roofed Turtle., some of which are considered **vulnerable or near-threatened species according to the** International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List and are protected under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- DRI serves as India's premier **anti-smuggling agency**, operating under the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs,** Ministry of Finance. It is responsible for detecting and preventing various forms of smuggling, including illicit wildlife trade.

.**Read more:** Indian Tent Turtle **,** Indian Flapshell Turtle

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Automatic 'Status Holder' Certificates Boost Indian Exports

Recently, the Union Minister of Commerce & Industry has unveiled an initiative involving the **issuance of automatic 'Status Holder' certificates** under the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023.**

- This system **eliminates the need for exporters to apply for a Status Certificate manually,** relying instead on an IT system's assessment based on available merchandise export data and risk parameters from the **Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS).**
  - This shift reduces compliance burdens and fosters ease of doing business.
- This initiative, recognizing about **20,000 exporters as Status Holders,** is poised to significantly boost the **export ecosystem** and help achieve India's export target of **USD 2 Trillion by 2030.**

Read more: Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023

Annual Joint HADR Exercise 2023 (Chakravat 2023)

The 2023 edition of the **Annual Joint HADR Exercise (AJHE)** is being hosted by the Indian Navy at Goa from **09th October 2023 to 11th Oct 2023.**

- Initiated in **2015** , this exercise marks a significant step towards enhancing collective response mechanisms to **humanitarian crises and natural disasters in the** Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- With climate change intensifying the region's vulnerability, India's inclusive vision for the oceans, known as **SAGAR**, underscores the importance of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) **operations.**

Read more: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**,** Indian Ocean Region.